

GOVERNMENT ARCHITECT NEW SOUTH WALES

19 December 2024

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PROJECT: 16-20 Old Castle Hill Road, Castle Hill
RE: State Design Review Panel – 11th December 2024 – Review 2

Dear Chris,

Thank you for the opportunity for ongoing review of the above project. Please find below a summary of advice and recommendations arising from the design review session held on 11th December 2024.

The design team are commended for undertaking substantial work incorporating the previous advice, including a peer review of the scheme and significant adjustments to the overall form. These changes have resolved a number of concerns and resulted in an improved outcome for both the Castle Hill area and future occupants.

As the scheme develops, greater consideration is required to refine the internal planning, increase the climate responsiveness and maximise opportunities for landscape to ensure design excellence is achieved.

In addition to items noted in the previous letter, the following elements of the proposal are supported:

- Engagement with the local Aboriginal knowledge-holders, with incorporation of these inputs into the landscape response.
- A clearly defined street wall and public domain edge through the integration of a podium, which:
 - has a scale consistent with the local context
 - incorporates two storey ‘terrace’ units along McMullen Avenue with direct access to the street.
- A revised tower form, which:
 - reduces floor plate sizes and presents a refined, slender form
 - increases distinction of the singular tower into two clearly defined forms

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- improves articulation of the height.
- Holistic consideration of family-friendly apartment living, with a changed apartment mix and layout to better provide for families, and increased provision and improved design of the communal spaces.
- Intention to have equity for all tenants by distributing affordable dwellings throughout the building with equal access to amenities such as shared facilities and common areas.

In addition to the advice provided in the previous letter, the following commentary provides advice and recommendations for the project:

Connecting with Country

The engagement of WSP to support the connecting with Country response has begun to inform the design outcome. Continued engagement is needed to ensure these emerging responses are enduring and impactful for Country.

1. Further develop the use of geometric shapes within the design of the entry plaza. Ensure any use of symbolism has a clear sense of purpose and is reflective of Indigenous knowledge holders' input.
2. Continue to pursue opportunities for prioritising the health of Country. Consider how the project can help heal Country through both the landscape and built form, e.g., exclusively locally endemic species, sustainable materials, minimising excavation, reuse of excavated stone on site, harvesting seeds and woody debris from removed vegetation for reuse in the landscape, etc.

Design excellence

There have been some key refinements to demonstrate how the scheme exhibits design excellence in accordance with The Hills Shire LEP and other relevant requirements of the DCP as per clause 7.7 (4) (d) and 7.7 (4) (e). Of these, the streetscape interfaces and solar access controls for Arthur Whitling Park require further consideration to demonstrate how these impacts can be appropriately balanced with the form and height of the scheme.

3. Provide thorough analysis of the overshadowing impacts of Arthur Whitling Park. Include calculations of the existing and proposed cumulative hours of sunlight received between 11:00 – 14:00 for the open space to inform the design response.

4. Demonstrate the proposed street setbacks and landscaping are sufficient to deliver the intended DCP street character. Further resolution is required for:
 - a. Garthowen Crescent – pursue opportunities to increase the setback and maximise opportunities for deep soil and landscape.
 - b. McMullen Avenue – provide further clarity for the landscape treatment before and after road widening. Demonstrate that the proposed treatment will be adequate to deliver sufficient amenity.

Site strategy and landscape

Per previous advice, the significant size of the basement results in minimal areas of deep soil, requires the removal of established trees and may have impacts on trees intended to be retained. The proximity to the Castle Hill Metro Station and reduced number of apartments, provide opportunity to reduce car parking and revise the intended basement layout. Additionally, there is further scope to increase canopy and areas of dense landscape throughout the communal open spaces and streetscape.

5. Pursue opportunities to increase deep soil, retain additional existing trees, and increase canopy cover by reducing basement extent and, where possible, adjusting the building footprint.
6. Per Item 16 from Advice Letter 1, provide bike storage at the ground floor that caters for families.
7. Demonstrate the proposed tree protection zone (TPZ) and root protection zones (RPZ) are sufficient to protect the health and wellbeing of existing trees. Consideration should also be given to minimising trimming of canopy to accommodate construction.
8. Ensure street tree planting is generous with a continuous canopy to allow for shade along all footpaths.

Built form

The shift to a tower with two separate vertical forms and a clearly defined podium has greatly improved the design response. Further work is needed to refine the design language and develop a clear distinction between the two forms, without creating a visually busy response.

9. Demonstrate a coherent approach to the architectural expression of the project through:
 - a. selective use of materials and colour palettes
 - b. balanced mixture of window treatments, sizes and orientation
 - c. exploration of the podium and tower relationship across the two forms that is either juxtaposed or strongly related.
10. Develop the expression of the intersection between the two forms to create a clear delineation without relying too heavily on materials and colours. This could include increasing the depth and width of the recess, defining the recess at just one building to allow the other to take dominance, and so forth.
11. Ensure there is sufficient summer solar shading incorporated within the façades to optimise internal comfort and minimise the need for artificial cooling. Consider ways of reducing heat gain, through:
 - a. reduced window to wall ratios, particularly for bedrooms and offices
 - b. fixed and adjustable external shading devices, for windows, balconies and façades
 - c. materials and colours with low solar heat gain.
12. Interrogate the configuration of the awning over the residential entrance and ground floor tenancy. Consider how the design and layout of the awning/s can ensure a legible and welcoming arrival to the residential building, while maintaining weather protection for the tenancy and entry plaza.

Architecture and family living

The incorporation of family-friendly design has begun to improve the amenity of apartments and communal spaces for families and young children. There is further potential to deliver outdoor spaces that cater to children of all ages, while the design of apartments can be tweaked to better suit the needs of families.

13. Continue to develop the design of the outdoor spaces to cater to a variety of family needs, including children of all ages.

14. Develop the layout and functions within the Level 1 Communal Indoor Space to better meet the needs of families by providing for a range of gathering and common activities. Explore:
 - a. creating nooks and/or smaller rooms to allow different families to occupy the space comfortably
 - b. designing flexible spaces with acoustic separation to allow for music practice, working from home, break out spaces, etc.
 - c. integrating a small kitchen or kitchenette
 - d. providing accessible toilets with parent facilities (i.e., baby changing table).
15. Explore how the layout and location of dining rooms can be adjusted to comfortably accommodate family sized dining tables (e.g., a two-bedroom apartment would require a minimum six-person dining table).
16. Continue to test internal layouts and furniture configurations to ensure each apartment best meets the needs of future occupants. Consider:
 - a. avoiding bathrooms opening to kitchens and dining rooms
 - b. minimising circulation space
 - c. ensuring generous living rooms that allow for high levels of flexibility
 - d. providing ample storage.
17. Revisit the configuration of the internal spaces where the two forms meet. Consider:
 - a. designing for cross-ventilation by introducing a breezeway through the building or introducing a plenum across the common hall to the adjacent unit/s
 - b. reconfiguring the inner areas of the floorplate with low natural light to uses better suited to these conditions, such as additional storage space, services, non-habitable facilities, creating additional common amenities which could be illuminated from the hall window, and so forth.
18. Confirm the location of the affordable housing in consultation with the affordable housing provider.

After the session, the following advice was provided:

19. Develop the design of the landscaping and balustrade treatment for the ground floor dwellings to ensure privacy. Consider how the sloped earthworks and building interface can provide for a high amenity streetscape, while still ensuring a clearly defined separation between private and public spaces.

Sustainability and climate change

20. Commit to a fully electrified and fossil fuel free building by:
 - a. having no gas connection to the site
 - b. providing EV charging facilities within the basement.
21. Demonstrate how the internal and external spaces will perform under the projected future climate for Castle Hill (refer to NSW Government's latest [NARCIIM](#) climate projection data and associated information). Consider how the design of these spaces can maximise comfort for residents.

The advice provided is to be addressed as part of the EIS submission.

Please contact GANSW Design Advisor, Tyson Ryan, (tyson.ryan@dpie.nsw.gov.au), if you have any queries regarding this advice.

Sincerely,



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Principal Design Advisor
Chair, SDRP

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